

S-K Program FY 2004 FF0

Overview Information

Federal Agency Names: Department of Commerce, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), Financial Services Division

Funding Opportunity Title: Fisheries Development and Utilization Research and Development Grants and Cooperative Agreements Program (also known as the Saltonstall-Kennedy (S-K) Grant Program)

Announcement Type: Initial

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 11.427

Dates: Applications must be received by the local close of business at one of the addresses listed to receive applications, on August 29, 2003.

Executive Summary

NMFS (hereinafter “we” or “us”) issues this document to describe how to apply for funding under the Saltonstall-Kennedy (S-K) Grant Program and how we will determine whether to fund a proposal. Under the S-K Program, we provide financial assistance for research and development projects that address various aspects of U.S. fisheries (commercial or recreational), including, but not limited to, harvesting, processing, aquaculture, marketing, and associated infrastructures.

Full Text of Announcement

I. Funding Opportunity Description

The Saltonstall-Kennedy (S-K) Act, as amended (15 U.S.C. 713c-3), established a fund (the S-K fund) that the Secretary of Commerce uses to provide grants or cooperative agreements for fisheries research and development projects addressed to any aspect of U.S. fisheries, including, but not limited to, harvesting, processing, aquaculture, marketing, and associated infrastructures. U.S. fisheries¹ include any fishery, commercial or recreational, that

¹ For purposes of this document, a fishery is defined as one or more stocks of fish, including tuna, and shellfish that are identified as a unit based on geographic, scientific, technical, recreational and economic characteristics, and any and all phases of fishing for such stocks. Examples of a fishery are Alaskan groundfish, Pacific whiting, New England whiting, and eastern oysters.

is, or may be, engaged in by citizens or nationals of the United States, or citizens of the Northern Mariana Islands (NMI), the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Republic of Palau, and the Federated States of Micronesia.

For the FY 2004 S-K Grant Program announced in this document, successful applications will be those aimed at helping fishing communities² to prevent overfishing, rebuild fisheries, and ensure conservation, while realizing the full potential of fishery resources.

The scope of the S-K Grant Program for FY 2004 includes species under Federal jurisdiction (whether under Fishery Management Plans (FMPs) or not), as well as state managed fisheries.

In order to be funded under the program, applications must propose activities that: address one of the funding priorities listed below; are expected to produce a direct benefit (e.g., tool, information, service, or technology) to the fishing community; and can be accomplished within 2 years. Acceptable research and development activities include applied research, demonstration projects, pilot or field testing, or business plan development. However, we will not fund projects that primarily involve infrastructure construction, port and harbor development, or start-up or operational costs for private business ventures. Furthermore, if your proposed project primarily involves data collection, we will only consider it if it is directed to a specific problem or need and has a fixed duration. We will not consider data collection programs of a continuing nature.

Your proposal must address one of the five priorities listed here. Under the S-K Program, a proposal can compete in only one priority area. Therefore, we ask that you select the one priority that most closely reflects the objectives of your proposal. If you list more than one priority, we reserve the right to assign a single priority to your application.

If we do not receive proposals that adequately respond to the priorities listed, we may use S-K funds to carry out a national program of research and development addressed to aspects of U.S. fisheries pursuant to section 713c-3(d) of the S-K Act, as amended.

The priorities are not listed in any particular order and each is of equal importance.

A. Fishing Capacity Reduction under the Magnuson-Stevens Act Sections 312(b)-(e)

Promote the reduction of excess harvesting capacity in appropriate fisheries by analyses and evaluations that prepare the proponents of buybacks financed by NMFS loans under Title XI of the Merchant Marine Act to consider, plan for, organize, justify, support, and effect financed buybacks. (See 50 CFR 600.1000, et seq. for framework rules governing buybacks; available electronically at: www.access.gpo.gov/nara/cfr/waisidx_01/50cfr600_01.html.) Acceptable activities include, but are not limited to:

1. Analyzing cost/benefit to determine a fishery's potential for financed buyback, including:
 - a. Establishing the type of financed buyback (i.e., permit only or permit and vessel buyback) that reduces the maximum capacity at the least cost in the least amount of time;
 - b. Knowledgeably estimating various capacity ranges in a fishery that could be bought back at various cost ranges;
 - c. Evaluating harvesters' pre-buyback cost-income, how various buyback capacity/cost ranges could change post-buyback cost-income, the prospective ability of post-buyback

²Fishing community is used in this document as defined in the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, as amended (Pub. Law 94-265), i.e., a community which is substantially dependent on or substantially engaged in the harvest or processing of fishery resources to meet social and economic needs, and includes fishing vessel owners, operators, and crew and United States fish processors that are based in such community.

harvesters to pay the estimated fees to service the buyback loan, and the benefits to them of doing so; and

d. Assuming the fishery's FMP already prohibits new entrants to the fishery, establishing the scope and possible content of appropriate FMP amendments that might first be required to effectively and permanently resolve latent capacity in that fishery prior to buyback, and to prevent post-buyback vessel upgrading or other circumstances from replacing the capacity that a buyback removes.

2. Evaluating detailed means and methods for industry buyback proponents in the fishery to efficiently and effectively:

a. Survey potential referendum voters (each permit holder in the buyback fishery) to establish the prospective degree of interest in, and support for, a financed buyback in that fishery, and

b. Prepare a successful financed buyback application and business plan (see 50 CFR 600.1003).

In addition to the above, responsible proponents of financed buybacks in individual fisheries may also submit proposals to prepare actual financed buyback applications and business plans for that fishery.

Note, depending on the type of activity you propose, we may be required to obtain approval under the Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA) for surveys, etc., related to this priority. You should consider this when preparing your application and estimated time lines.

B. Conservation Engineering

Reduce or eliminate adverse interactions between fishing operations and nontargeted, protected, or prohibited species, including the inadvertent take, capture, or destruction of such species. These include juvenile or sublegal-sized fish and shellfish, females of certain crabs, fish listed under the ESA, marine turtles, seabirds, or marine mammals.

Improve the survivability of fish discarded or intentionally released and of protected species released in fishing operations.

Reduce or eliminate impacts of fishing activity on Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) that adversely affect the sustainability of the fishery.

C. Optimum Utilization of Harvested Resources under Federal or State Management

Reduce or eliminate factors such as diseases, human health hazards, and quality problems that limit the utilization of fish and their products in the United States and abroad.

Increase public knowledge of the safe handling and use of fish and their products.

Develop usable products from economic discards (defined in the Magnuson-Stevens Act as "fish which are the target of a fishery, but which are not retained because they are of an undesirable size, sex, or quality, or for other economic reasons"), underutilized species, and byproducts of processing.

Facilitate industry cooperation and outreach to promote and enhance marketability of regional U.S. fishery products.

Collect data on population dynamics, life histories, etc., of fish not currently under Federal FMPs, for the Councils to determine the feasibility of a new federally managed fishery that could provide additional fishing opportunity.

D. Marine Aquaculture

Advance the implementation of marine aquaculture by addressing technical aspects such as systems engineering, environmental compatibility, and culture technology.

Reduce or eliminate legal and social barriers to aquaculture development, e.g., legal constraints, use conflicts, exclusionary mapping, and appropriate institutional roles. However, we will not fund such costs as legal assistance with applying for operational permits.

Address environmental issues for marine aquaculture, e.g., measure and reduce the adverse impacts on water quality and benthic community impacts; evaluate and reduce negative interactions between aquaculture and wild stocks, protected resources, and EFH; develop best management practices with scientific analysis and assessment of risk.

Develop effective enhancement strategies for marine and anadromous species to help in the recovery of wild stocks.

E. Fisheries Socioeconomics

Improve the understanding of the socioeconomic aspects of fisheries to increase the knowledge base for making decisions that affect commercial, recreational, and subsistence fishing. Examples could include, but are not limited to, ethnographic baseline data on specific fishing communities; cost-income data; analyses of the socioeconomic impacts of specific management measures in certain fisheries; analyses of factors influencing demand for recreational fishing trips by anglers; and, market analyses to determine factors that influence demand and supply of specific seafood products, including imports.

Such initiatives must be discrete projects that can be carried out within an 2-year maximum project period. Studies must not duplicate or overlap any other ongoing socioeconomic data collection and analyses programs. We encourage projects that are industry-sponsored but involve the academic community or management agencies.

II. Award Information

This solicitation covers Fiscal Year (FY) 2004. We expect to make awards early in FY 2004, which begins on October 1, 2003.

We are not conducting the competitive S-K Program for FY 2003 due to lack of funding. Although the S-K allocation for FY 2003 was \$10,223,800, the Consolidated Appropriations Resolution, 2003 (Pub. Law 108-7) directed \$10 million to the Alaska Fisheries Marketing Board. In accordance with the Conference Report that accompanied the appropriations, we are making \$223,800 available to the Gulf and South Atlantic Fisheries Foundation for consumer education efforts related to Vibrio vulnificus.

We do not yet have an allocation for FY 2004, although we estimate that the President's budget request will provide a total of about \$4 million for awards under this program. We do not specify a minimum or maximum dollar amount for individual awards.

We will award grants or cooperative agreements for a maximum period of 2 years. We award cooperative agreements in those situations where we anticipate having substantial involvement in the project. "Substantial involvement" means we will collaborate regarding the performance of the project. Specific terms of "substantial involvement" will be contained in Special Award Conditions.

We do not fund multi-year projects (beyond the 2-year maximum). If we select your application for funding and you wish to continue work on the project beyond the funding period, you must submit another proposal to the competitive process for consideration, and you will not receive preferential treatment.

We are hereby notifying you that funding has not yet been allocated for this FY 2004 program. Furthermore, we cannot guarantee that sufficient funds will be available to make awards for all qualified projects. Publication of this notice does not oblige us to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds. If you incur any costs prior to receiving an award agreement signed by an authorized NOAA official, you do so solely at your own risk of these costs not being included under the award. Notwithstanding any verbal or written assurance that you may have received, pre-award costs are not allowed under the award unless the Grants Officer approves them in accordance with 15 CFR 14.28.

III. Eligibility Information

1. Eligible Applicants

You are eligible to apply for a grant or a cooperative agreement under the S-K Grant Program if:

1. You are a citizen or national of the United States;
2. You are a citizen of the NMI, being an individual who qualifies as such under section 8 of the Schedule on Transitional Matters attached to the constitution of the NMI;
3. You are a citizen of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Republic of Palau, or the Federated States of Micronesia; or
4. You represent an entity that is an institution of higher education, other nonprofit, commercial organization, state, local or Indian tribal government, if such entity is a citizen of the United States or NMI, within the meaning of section 2 of the Shipping Act, 1916, as amended (46 U.S.C. app. 802).

We support cultural and gender diversity in our programs and encourage women and minority individuals and groups to submit applications.

Furthermore, we recognize the interests of the Secretaries of Commerce and Interior in defining appropriate fisheries policies and programs that meet the needs of the U.S. insular areas, so we especially encourage applications from individuals, government entities, and businesses in U.S. insular areas, including the Northern Mariana Islands, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Republic of Palau, and the Federated States of Micronesia.

We are strongly committed to broadening the participation of Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs), which include Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Hispanic Serving Institutions, and Tribal Colleges and Universities, in all of our programs, including S-K. Therefore, we encourage all applicants to include meaningful participation of MSIs. A list of institutions considered to be MSIs is available at: www.ed.gov/offices/OCR/minorityinst.html.

We encourage applications from members of the fishing community, and applications that involve fishing community cooperation and participation. The selecting official will consider the extent of fishing community collaboration when evaluating the potential benefit of funding a proposal.

You are not eligible to submit an application under this program if you are an employee of any Federal agency, a Fishery Management Council (Council), or an employee of a Council. However, Council members who are not Federal employees can submit an application to the S-K Program.

2. Cost Sharing or Matching

You must provide a minimum cost share of 10 percent of total (Federal and non-Federal combined) project costs, but your cost share must not exceed 50 percent of total costs. It is important that you correctly calculate cost share in preparing your application. If your application does not provide at least 10 percent, or provides in excess of 50 percent, of the total (Federal and non-Federal combined) costs as cost share, we must return it to you without further consideration. We will not accept your application if you have rounded up the cost share amount to meet the minimum (e.g., 9.5 percent does not meet the legal requirement to provide at least 10 percent).

You may find this formula useful:

1. Total Project Cost (Federal and non-Federal cost share combined) x .9 = Maximum Federal Share.

2. Total Cost - Federal share = Applicant Share.

For example, if the proposed total budget for your project is \$100,000, the maximum Federal funding you can apply for is \$90,000 (\$100,000 x .9). Your cost share in this case would be \$10,000 (\$100,000 - \$90,000).

For a total project cost of \$100,000, you must contribute at least \$10,000, but no more than \$50,000 (10 to 50 percent of total project cost). Accordingly, the Federal share you apply for would range from \$50,000 to \$90,000.

The funds you provide as cost sharing may include funds from private sources or from state or local governments, or the value of in-kind contributions. You may not use Federal funds to meet the cost sharing requirement except as provided by Federal statute. In-kind contributions are non-cash contributions provided to you by non-Federal third parties. In-kind contributions may include, but are not limited to, personal services volunteered to perform tasks in the project, and permission to use, at no cost, real or personal property owned by others.

We will determine the appropriateness of all cost sharing proposals, including the valuation of in-kind contributions, on the basis of guidance provided in 15 CFR parts 14 and 24. In general, the value of in-kind services or property you use to fulfill your cost share will be the fair market value of the services or property. Thus, the value is equivalent to the cost for you to obtain such services or property if they had not been donated. You must document the in-kind services or property you will use to fulfill your cost share.

If we decide to fund your application, we will require you to account for the total amount of cost share included in the award document (see 66 FR 49918, October 1, 2001, for additional information on cost sharing).

IV. Application and Submission Information

1. Address to Request Application Package

You can get an application package from any of the NMFS Regional or Headquarters offices listed:

Northeast Region, NMFS, One Blackburn Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930; (978) 281-9267.

Southeast Region, NMFS, 9721 Executive Center Drive, North, St. Petersburg, FL 33702-2432, (727) 570-5324.

Southwest Region, NMFS, 501 West Ocean Boulevard, Suite 4200, Long Beach, CA 90802-4213, (562) 980-4033.

Pacific Islands Region, NMFS, 1601 Kapiolani Boulevard, Suite 1110, Honolulu, HI 96814-4700, (808) 973-2937.

Northwest Region, NMFS, 7600 Sand Point Way, N.E., BIN C15700, Building 1, Seattle, WA 98115, (206) 526-6115.

Alaska Region, NMFS, P.O. Box 21668, Juneau, AK 99802 or Federal Building, 709 West 9th Street, 4th Floor, Juneau, AK 99801-1668, (907) 586-7224.

Financial Services Division, NMFS F/CS2, 1315 East West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910, (301) 713-2358.

You may also get the application package from the NMFS S-K Home Page at: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfweb/skhome.html>.

2. Content and Format of Application Submission

You must follow the instructions in this document in order to apply for a grant or cooperative agreement under the S-K Program. Your application must be complete and must follow the format described here. Your application should not be bound in any manner and must be printed on one side only. You must submit one signed original and nine signed copies of your application (including supporting information).

Our employees (whether full-time, part-time, or intermittent) are not allowed to help you prepare your application, except that S-K Program staff may provide you with information on program goals, funding priorities, application procedures, and completion of application forms. Since this is a competitive program, NMFS and NOAA employees will not help with conceptualizing, developing, or structuring proposals, or write letters of support for a proposal.

You must submit the following:

A. Cover Sheet

You must use Office of Management and Budget (OMB) SF 424 and 424B (4-92) as the cover sheet for each project.

B. Project Summary

You must complete NOAA Form 88-204 (10-04), Project Summary, for each project. You must list on the Project Summary form the specific priority to which the application responds (from section I. of this document).

C. Project Budget

You must submit a budget for each project, using NOAA Form 88-205 (10-04), Project Budget, and associated instructions. You must provide detailed cost estimates showing total project costs. Indicate the breakdown of costs between Federal and non-Federal shares, divided into cash and in-kind contributions. To support the budget, describe briefly the basis for estimating the value of the cost sharing derived from in-kind contributions. Specify estimates of the direct costs in the categories listed on the Project Budget form.

You may also include in the budget an amount for indirect costs if you have an established indirect cost rate with the Federal government. However, the total dollar amount of the indirect costs you propose in your application must not exceed the indirect cost rate negotiated and approved by a cognizant Federal agency prior to the proposed effective date of the award, or 100 percent of the total proposed direct costs dollar amount in the application, whichever is less. Furthermore, the Federal share of the indirect costs you propose must not exceed 25 percent of the total proposed direct costs.

If you have an approved indirect cost rate above 25 percent of the total proposed direct cost, you may use the amount above the 25-percent level up to the 100-percent level as part of the non-Federal share. You must include a copy of the current, approved, negotiated indirect cost agreement with the Federal government with your application.

D. Narrative Project Description

You must provide a narrative description of your project that may be up to 15 pages long. The narrative should demonstrate your knowledge of the need for the project, and show how your proposal builds upon any past and current work in the subject area, as well as relevant work in related fields. You should not assume that we already know the relative merits of the project you describe. You must describe your project as follows:

1. Project goals and objectives. Identify the specific priority listed in section I. to which the proposed project responds. Identify the problem/opportunity you intend to address and describe its significance to the fishing community. List the project objectives.

If you are applying to continue a project we previously funded under the S-K Program, describe in detail your progress to date and explain why you need additional funding. We will consider this information in evaluating your current application.

2. Project impacts. Describe the anticipated impacts of the project on the fishing community in terms of reduced bycatch, increased product yield, or other measurable benefits.

3. Evaluation of project. Specify the criteria and procedures that you will use to evaluate the relative success or failure of a project in achieving its objectives.

4. Education and outreach. Describe how the project will provide a focused and effective education and outreach strategy regarding NOAA's mission to protect the Nation's natural resources. Describe how you will make the results of the project available to the public.

5. Need for government financial assistance. Explain why you need government financial assistance for the proposed work. List all other sources of funding you have or are seeking for the project. If you have a pending grant application with another funding source that is similar or identical to this application and it is approved for funding after you submit this application to us, we request that you notify us immediately.

6. Federal, state, and local government activities and permits. List any existing Federal, state, or local government programs or activities that this project would affect, including activities requiring: certification under state Coastal Zone Management Plans; section 404 or section 10 permits issued by the Corps of Engineers; experimental fishing or other permits under FMPs; environmental impact statements to meet the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA); scientific permits under the Endangered Species Act and/or the Marine Mammal Protection Act; or Magnuson-Stevens Act EFH consultation if the project may adversely affect areas identified as EFH. Describe the relationship between the project and these FMPs or activities, and list names and addresses of persons providing this information. You can get information on these activities from the NMFS Regions (see section IV.1.). If we select your project for funding, you are responsible for complying with all applicable requirements.

For projects that would require permits and consultations, list all necessary permits required to complete the project, the appropriate contact information for each permitting agency, and documentation of all permits already secured for the project. Your narrative should provide assurance that all necessary environmental permits and consultations will be secured prior to the use of Federal funds. Your application should provide enough detail for us to make a NEPA determination; funds will not be released to successful applicants until we complete necessary NEPA documentation. We encourage you to consult with us as early as possible to obtain guidance about the level and scope of information we need to comply with NEPA; a phased approach may be recommended. The type of detailed information described above is critical to evaluating the significance of a project and its readiness to use available funding.

7. Project statement of work. The statement of work is an action plan of activities you will conduct during the period of the project. You must prepare a detailed narrative, fully describing the work you will perform to achieve the project goals and objectives. The narrative should respond to the following questions:

(a) What is the project design? What specific work, activities, procedures, statistical design, or analytical methods will you undertake?

(b) Who will be responsible for carrying out the various activities? (Highlight work that will be subcontracted and provisions for competitive subcontracting.)

(c) What are the major products and how will project results be disseminated? Describe products of the project, such as a manual, video, technique, or piece of equipment. Indicate how project results will be disseminated to potential users.

(d) What are the project milestones? List milestones, describing the specific activities and associated time lines to conduct the scope of work. Describe the time lines in increments (e.g., month 1, month 2), rather than by specific dates. Identify the individual(s) responsible for the various specific activities.

This information is critical for us to conduct a thorough review of your application, so we encourage you to provide sufficient detail.

8. Participation by persons or groups other than the applicant. Describe how government and non-government entities, particularly members of fishing communities, will participate in the project, and the nature of their participation. We will consider the degree of participation by members of the fishing community in determining which applications to fund.

9. Project management. Describe how the project will be organized and managed. Identify the principal investigator and other participants in the project. If you do not identify the principal investigator, we will return your application without further consideration. Include copies of any agreements between you and the participants describing the specific tasks to be performed. Provide a statement no more than two pages long of the qualifications and experience (e.g., resume or curriculum vitae) of the principal investigator(s) and any consultants and/or subcontractors, and indicate their level of involvement in the project. If any portion of the project will be conducted through consultants and/or subcontracts, you must follow procurement guidance in 15 CFR part 24, "Grants and Cooperative Agreements to State and Local Governments," and 15 CFR part 14, "Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Agreements with Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, Other Non-Profit, and Commercial Organizations." If you select a consultant and/or a subcontractor prior to submitting an application, indicate the process that you used for selection.

E. Supporting Documentation

You should include any relevant documents and additional information (i.e., maps, background documents) that will help us to understand the project and the problem/opportunity you seek to address.

3. Submission Dates and Times

Applications must be received by the local close of business at one of the addresses listed under item 6, on August 29, 2003.. All applications will be stamped with the date of receipt by the receiving office.

4. Intergovernmental Review

This funding opportunity is subject to Executive Order 12372, "Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs." Therefore, you must complete Item 16 on SF424 (4-92) regarding clearance by the State Point Of Contact (SPOC). The Executive Order requires applicants under this program to file a copy of their application with the SPOCs of all states relevant to the project. You must provide a copy of your completed application to the appropriate SPOC on or before the application due date. You are encouraged to contact the SPOC well before the due date. You can get the list of SPOCs from any of the NMFS offices listed in this document, or from the S-K Home Page, at:

<http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfweb/skhome.html>. It is also included in the CFDA, which can be accessed electronically at: <http://www.cfda.gov/>. Note, not all states have the SPOC.

5. Funding Restrictions

We will not fund projects that primarily involve infrastructure construction, port and harbor development, or start-up or operational costs for private business ventures. Furthermore, if your proposed project primarily involves data collection, we will only consider it if it is directed to a specific problem or need and has a fixed duration. We will not consider data collection programs of a continuing nature.

The total dollar amount of the indirect costs you propose in your application must not exceed the indirect cost rate negotiated and approved by a cognizant Federal agency prior to the proposed effective date of the award, or 100 percent of the total proposed direct costs dollar amount in the application, whichever is less. Furthermore, the Federal share of the indirect

costs you propose must not exceed 25 percent of the total proposed direct costs. If your application requests more than 25 percent of the total costs as Federal funds to cover indirect costs, the application will be returned to you and will not be considered for funding.

We will not consider fees or profits as allowable costs in your application.

The total costs of a project consist of all allowable costs you incur, including the value of in-kind contributions, in accomplishing project objectives during the life of the project. A project begins on the effective date of an award agreement between you and an authorized representative of the U.S. Government and ends on the date specified in the award. Accordingly, we cannot reimburse you for time that you expend or costs that you incur in developing a project or preparing the application, or in any discussions or negotiations you may have with us prior to the award. We will not accept such expenditures as part of your cost share.

6. Other Submission Requirements

You must submit applications to one of the following NMFS Regional Administrator or Headquarters offices:

Northeast Region, NMFS, One Blackburn Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930; (978) 281-9267.

Southeast Region, NMFS, 9721 Executive Center Drive, North, St. Petersburg, FL 33702-2432, (727) 570-5324.

Southwest Region, NMFS, 501 West Ocean Boulevard, Suite 4200, Long Beach, CA 90802-4213, (562) 980-4033.

Pacific Islands Region, NMFS, 1601 Kapiolani Boulevard, Suite 1110, Honolulu, HI 96814-4700, (808) 973-2937.

Northwest Region, NMFS, 7600 Sand Point Way, N.E., BIN C15700, Building 1, Seattle, WA 98115, (206) 526-6115.

Alaska Region, NMFS, P.O. Box 21668, Juneau, AK 99802 or Federal Building, 709 West 9th Street, 4th Floor, Juneau, AK 99801-1668, (907) 586-7224.

Financial Services Division, NMFS F/CS2, 1315 East West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910, (301) 713-2358.

We will not accept facsimile applications or applications submitted electronically.

V. Application Review Information

1. Criteria

Applications will be reviewed for merit using the following criteria, with weights shown in parentheses:

1. Importance and/or relevance and applicability of proposed project to the program goals:

This ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and/or relevance to NOAA, Federal, regional, state, or local activities. For this competition, this includes: Is there intrinsic value in the proposed work? What is the likelihood of project results in the specified time frame? Will project results and/or products benefit fishing community members? (25 percent)

2. Technical/scientific merit: This assesses whether the approach is technically sound and/or innovative, if the methods are appropriate, and whether there are clear project goals and objectives. For this competition, this includes: Is there sufficient information to evaluate the project? Are there clear project goals and objectives? Are the project design and conceptual approach technically sound? Are the methods appropriate? How innovative is the approach?

How effective are the methods proposed to evaluate the success or failure of the project in meeting its original objectives? (35 percent)

3. Overall qualifications of applicants: This ascertains whether the applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project. For this competition, this includes: Do the principal investigator(s) and other project personnel possess the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the research? If the application includes consultants and contractors, is the involvement of the primary applicant necessary to the conduct of the project and the accomplishment of its objectives? (20 percent)

4. Project costs: The budget is evaluated to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time-frame. For this competition, this includes: Is the proposed budget realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time-frame? (15 percent)

5. Outreach and education: This assesses whether this project provides a focused and effective education and outreach strategy regarding NOAA's mission to protect the Nation's natural resources. For this competition, this includes: How will project results be transferred to end users? How will this project provide a focused and effective education and outreach strategy regarding NOAA's mission to protect the Nations natural resources? (5 percent)

2. Review and Selection Process

A. Initial Screening of Applications

When we receive applications, we will first screen them to ensure that they were received by the deadline date; include OMB form 424 signed and dated by an authorized representative; were submitted by an eligible applicant; provide for at least a 10-percent cost share but not more than 50 percent; involve an eligible activity; address one of the funding priorities for species under Federal or State jurisdiction; include a budget and a statement of work including milestones; and identify the principal investigator. Note, if we find, at any point in the process, that your application does not fully conform to these requirements and the deadline for submission has passed, we will return it to you without further consideration.

We do not have to screen applications before the submission deadline, nor do we have to give you an opportunity to correct any deficiencies that cause your application to be rejected.

B. Merit Review of Proposed Projects

After the initial screening, we will solicit individual reviews of each accepted application from three or more appropriate private and public sector experts, as well as industry representatives. No consensus recommendations will be made. Reviewers will be required to certify that they do not have a conflict of interest concerning the application(s) they are reviewing. They will assign scores ranging from a minimum of 60 (poor) to a maximum of 100 (excellent) to applications based on the criteria listed in section V.1.

Following the merit review, we will determine the weighted score for each individual review, and average the individual scores for each application. Then, we will rank applications in descending order by their average scores, and determine a "cutoff" minimum score for merit that considers the funds available for grants. The cutoff may be set at a level that exceeds the total amount of funds available. We will eliminate from further consideration those applications that scored below the cutoff.

C. Selection Procedures and Project Funding

We will provide the ranked list of applications above the cutoff to the NMFS Regional Administrators (RAs) and Office Directors (ODs) for review based on their consideration of the significance of individual projects to fishing community members. RAs/ODs will prepare written justifications for any recommendations for funding of projects that fall below the available

funding cutoff, or for any cost adjustments. We will use this input to develop recommendations for project funding.

The Assistant Administrator for Fisheries (AA) will review the funding recommendations and comments of the RAs/ODs and determine the projects to be funded. In making the final selections, the AA may consider the following selection factors:

1. Availability of funding
2. Balance/distribution of funds:
 - a. Geographically
 - b. By type of institutions
 - c. Among partners
 - d. Research areas or project types
3. Duplication of other projects funded or considered for funding by NOAA/federal agencies
4. Program priorities and policy factors, i.e., significance/potential benefit to fishing community members (see Section I., paragraph 2)
5. Applicant's prior award performance
6. Partnerships and/or participation of targeted groups

VI. Award Administration Information

1. Award Notices

Following the AA's decision, we will notify you in writing whether your application is selected or not. Furthermore, if your application is not selected, we will return it to you. Successful applications will be incorporated into the award document.

The exact amount of funds, the scope of work, and terms and conditions of a successful award will be determined in pre-award negotiations between you and NOAA/NMFS representatives. The funding instrument (grant or cooperative agreement) will be determined by NOAA Grants.

You should not initiate your project in expectation of Federal funding based on notification that your application is selected. Rather, you should wait until you receive a grant award document signed by an authorized NOAA official.

2. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

The Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements published in the Federal Register October 1, 2001 (66 FR 49917), as amended by the Federal Register notice of October 30, 2002 (67 FR 66109), are applicable to this funding opportunity. Therefore, this document does not include a discussion of the individual requirements. A copy of the requirements notice is available on the S-K Home Page.

In addition, as an applicant, you must meet all application requirements and provide all information necessary for the evaluation of the proposal(s) and be available to respond to questions during the review and evaluation of the proposal(s).

If you are awarded a grant or cooperative agreement for a project, you must manage the day-to-day operations of the project; be responsible for the performance of all activities for which funds are granted; be responsible for the satisfaction of all administrative and managerial conditions imposed by the award; keep records sufficient to document any costs incurred under the award; and submit reports in accordance with the next section.

3. Reporting

You must submit financial status reports (SF 269) to NOAA's Grants Management Division in accordance with the award conditions.

You must submit semiannual project status reports on the use of funds and progress of the project to us within 30 days after the end of each 6-month period. You will submit these reports to the individual identified as the NMFS Program Officer in the funding agreement.

You must submit a final report within 90 days after completion of each project to the NMFS Program Officer. The final report must describe the project and include an evaluation of the work you performed and the results and benefits in sufficient detail to enable us to assess the success of the completed project.

We are committed to using available technology to achieve the timely and wide distribution of final reports to those who would benefit from this information. Therefore, you are required to submit final reports in electronic format, in accordance with the award terms and conditions, for publication on the S-K Home Page. You may charge the costs associated with preparing and transmitting your final reports in electronic format to the grant award. We will consider requests for exemption from the electronic submission requirement on a case-by-case basis.

We will provide you with OMB-approved formats for the semiannual and final reports.

In addition to the final report, we request that you submit any publications printed with grant funds (such as manuals, surveys, etc.) to the NMFS Program Officer for dissemination to the public. Submit either three hard copies or an electronic version of any such publications.

We reserve the right to conduct a post-closeout evaluation of project results in terms of demonstrated benefit to fishing communities, as indicated by awareness of the work conducted, state of knowledge advanced, adoption of techniques or methods developed, implementation of plans prepared, etc. Evaluation may be conducted by appropriate individuals within or outside NOAA. If this process requires any additional information from you, we will first obtain the proper clearances under the Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA).

VII. Agency Contacts

For further information, you may contact: Alicia L. Jarboe, S-K Program Manager at (301) 713-2358, or by email at: alicia.jarboe@noaa.gov. You may also contact the NMFS Regional Federal Program Officers, at the addresses and telephone numbers listed in section IV.1.

You may also visit the NMFS S-K Home Page at: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfweb/skhome.html>.

VIII. Other Information

Prior notice and an opportunity for public comments are not required by the Administrative Procedure Act (5 U.S.C. 553(a)(2)) or any other law for this notice concerning grants, benefits, and contracts.

Furthermore, because a notice is not a regulation, a regulatory flexibility analysis is not required by the Regulatory Flexibility Act (5 U.S.C. 601 *et seq.*) or any other law, and none has been prepared.

This action has been determined to be not significant for purposes of Executive Order 12866.

Notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person is required to respond to, nor shall any person be subject to a penalty for failure to comply with, a collection of information subject

to the requirements of the PRA unless that collection of information displays a currently valid OMB control number.

This document contains collection-of-information requirements subject to the PRA. The use of SF 424 and SF424B have been approved by the OMB under the respective control numbers 0348-0043 and 0348-0040. NOAA-specific requirements, including forms 88-204, Project Summary, and 88-205, Project Budget, have been approved under OMB control number 0648-0135. These requirements and their estimated response times are 1 hour for a project summary, 1 hour for a budget form, 2.5 hours for a semiannual report, and 13 hours for a final report. These estimates include the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding these burden estimates or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Alicia Jarboe, F/CS2, Room 13112, 1315 East West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910-3282.